

EOTEC CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES AS CENTER PREPARES TO HOST FARM FAIR

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Work on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center has been moving along quickly in the last month.

Carl Hendon, CFO for Hendon Construction, said the company has been working to accelerate the schedule for the rodeo arena.

"As things stand right now, I'd say we're a week to 10 days ahead of schedule," he told the EOTEC

board during their Friday meeting.

He said with construction it's always possible that roadblocks will come up in the future, but for now the goal is to finish the arena in June.

The board also heard an update from Knerr Construction. John Eckhardt told them that American Fencing was the low bidder for on-site fencing and the landscaping bids will be in this week. Creation of the

metal barn buildings is in the works, as are the pens and panels. The company will hire subcontractors for installation of the barns in December.

Business manager Heather Cannell said she had been working with G2 Construction and Frew Development Group to fix a checklist of problems with the event center that were discussed at a board workshop in October.

Some issues, like the

water heater not making the water hot enough, have already been fixed. Others, like an imperfection in the glass front doors that makes them look streaky, are scheduled to be repaired. And some, like a loud jet engine sound in the conference room when the HVAC system kicks on, still have people working to locate the problem.

Cannell said the event center has been busy, with events every day last week

and the Hermiston Farm Fair coming up at the beginning of December.

After speaking with the nonprofits that have traditionally had a permanent food building at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds, board member Dan Dorran asked for and received permission to begin searching for mobile food trucks to use instead.

The trucks, instead of buildings, will allow for more flexibility

in arranging the fair and could be rented out during the year for use at other events.

Dorran said Hermiston Christian School has said it does not want to continue selling hot food, meaning the board only has to find two trucks. He said he believed he could procure two used food trucks for less than \$75,000.

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

Hermiston leads county in population growth

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Hermiston is still growing.

According to preliminary estimates released by Portland State University's Population Research Center, Hermiston's population grew by 210 people between July 2015 and July 2016. The university estimates Hermiston's population at 17,730 this year.

The growth should come as no surprise to anyone in the Hermiston School District, which saw an extra 141 students in September enrollment counts.

Overall Umatilla County grew by 725 residents for just under a 1 percent increase in growth over 12 months.

Umatilla also had a significant jump in growth, go-

ing from 7,060 residents to 7,220. Pendleton grew by an estimated 35 residents, from 16,845 to 16,880.

Echo and Milton-Freewater's populations held steady, while Stanfield's dipped by five residents.

Neighboring Morrow County grew by a full one percent, jumping from 11,630 residents in July 2015 to 11,745 this July. Half of the increase was inside the city limits of Boardman, which is now at 3,555 people, and most of the rest was in the unincorporated parts of the county.

Irrigon's population dipped by 30 residents, down to 1,900.

Oregon as a whole grew 1.6 percent and is now up to 4,076,350 people living in the state.



The Hermiston water tower got a fresh coat of paint and new logo in October, replacing the former "You Can GROW Here" slogan.

Simmons Insurance holds grand opening at former RoeMarks building

Simmons Insurance Group will unveil the newly-renovated RoeMarks building at an open house on Nov. 29.

The insurance company purchased the former western wear store in downtown Hermiston, which had sat empty for nearly four years, in May. They will maintain offices on the eastern side of the building and have leased portions of the west side (on the corner of Main Street and Northeast Second Street) to Scrubs and Bloomz Coffee Bar.

The 6,000 square foot space on the eastern side

will hold administrative office and commercial insurance for Simmons Insurance while the company's home, auto and health offices will remain at 702 E. Main St.

Renovations to the new space included hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of new HVAC, lighting, windows, flooring and walls. A facade grant from the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency provided the money for windows to be restored to the upper floors.

To see the new office, visit the grand opening and ribbon cutting at noon Tuesday, Nov. 29.

Fuzzball Animal Rescue looking for foster homes

Operation uses volunteers' homes

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The animals of Fuzzball Animal Rescue aren't always easy to find homes for.

The small Hermiston rescue operation, which places injured and sick stray animals into foster homes while they are nursed back to health, has rescued everything from a playful kitten with a broken leg to a geriatric Shi Tzu with a skin condition.

The Shi Tzu's name is Sweetie Pie and she is still looking for a forever home. Her foster mom, Joellyn Herriman, said Sweetie Pie was found near Hat Rock in August.

"She's pretty much blind and pretty much deaf, but she's a nice girl," Herriman said.

She hopes perhaps a retired couple or someone

else who doesn't mind keeping the little dog company during the day and giving her medicated baths will come forward to give her a home.

Fuzzball Animal Rescue foots the bill for veterinarian care and food for foster animals like Sweetie Pie, but the small nonprofit relies entirely on foster homes instead of running a shelter. The group is in desperate need of more fosters who don't mind temporarily hosting a kitten with a respiratory infection or a dog with an injured paw.

"That is huge," Herriman said. "We can't take in animals if they don't have somewhere to go."

She said finances are also a "challenge" and the group could always use donations or help fundraising. Most of the money goes toward veterinarian fees for not only healing the animals, but also getting them vaccinated, spayed/neutered and microchipped before they are adopted out.

Herriman said she and her husband have two dogs of their own, as well as a couple of cats that they meant to just foster but ended up keeping. They also continue to take in cats and dogs rescued by Fuzzball off and on throughout the year.

"I like my animals to have little breaks, and us to have little breaks," she said. Some of the foster animals need some extra love and care, but Herriman said it is always a good feeling to save the life of an animal that may have otherwise been euthanized for something as fixable as a broken bone.

Once an animal is in good enough health, the group takes them to adoption events like the nationwide one recently hosted by PetSmart. They also adopt animals out directly or do transfers with other rescue groups. Pictures of the animals currently available can be found on the Fuzzball Animal Rescue Facebook page or at www.fuzzballrescue.com/adoptable-pets.

To inquire about adopting a pet, donating, becoming a foster or reporting an injured stray, email fuzzballrescue@gmail.com or send a message through the group's Facebook page, which is monitored daily. Donations can also be given directly to Oregon Trail Veterinary Clinic, which provides the care for Fuzzball animals.

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

Alcohol suspected in death of student over the weekend

A Hermiston High School student died Sunday afternoon from a possible alcohol overdose.

Hermiston School District reported Cesar Roque, 15, was a sophomore soccer player for the school. A written statement from the district called the death "tragic" and stated "our thoughts and prayers go out to all affected by this tragedy."

The district also stated it will provide support for



Roque

staff and students during this difficult time on Monday at Hermiston High School and Armand Larive Middle School.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said there is an ongoing investigation into who provided the alcohol to Roque, who was a minor.

He said there was not yet an official cause of death, but alcohol appeared to be a prime factor.



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